

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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## DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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Reply To: (213) 738-4601

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March 10, 2010

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.

Director of Mental Health

SUBJECT: **SAFETY COMPLAINT FOR NORTHEAST MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

This is in response to a February 24, 2010, complaint received by the Executive Office Public Response Form e-mail address from Nancy Corona, Mental Health Counselor, R.N., at Northeast Mental Health Center (NMHC). Over the past weeks, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) has been diligently working on addressing facility issues at NMHC. Listed below is each issue and the action that has been taken by DMH:

### Complaint

Following the unusually high rainstorms at the end of 2009, County employees at NMHC noticed unpleasant mold-like odors in their work areas.

### Actions Taken

- Offered the affected employees the opportunity to relocate to other, unaffected portions of the facility. Some employees took advantage of this offer and moved, while others chose to remain at their current locations.
- Offered the affected employees Accident/Injury Assistance packets and encouraged them to seek medical attention for any perceived injuries.
- Worked with the Chief Executive Office, Real Estate Division and with the property owner to inspect the property and remove any mold. The property owner promptly repaired water damage at the facility and commissioned an inspection of the property for mold and any mold-like odors. The inspection failed to confirm that any mold or mold-like odors were present.
- The property owner hired a plumber to inspect the property further, and the plumber discovered that the employees at the facility were using the drains in the kitchen to dispose of garbage, including coffee grounds, which could explain the odors at the facility.

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- The property owner hired a professional crew to inspect the condition of the property and conduct renovation.

### **Complaint**

While the professional crew was working on the property, DMH received another complaint from the employees related to the equipment that was used during the renovation work. According to the complaint, the crew used unacceptable "industrial sprays."

### **Actions Taken**

- DMH reviewed this complaint and concluded that no non-standard equipment was used during this renovation. Nevertheless, DMH has requested a copy of the Material Data Safety Sheets regarding the sprays that were used during the renovation. This information will help us assess the safety characteristics of the equipment and determine whether the use of the equipment represented any serious risk to the employees' health. Once we complete this analysis, the employees at the facility will receive a written report with further assurances that all health and safety complaints will be resolved promptly. If necessary, the Department will commission a further environmental air-quality report to confirm the absence of any dangerous substances in the air at the facility.

DMH will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that we are in compliance with the safety and security of the employees at this facility as required by all applicable laws, rules, regulations and policies. Additionally, on Tuesday, March 2, 2010, representatives from our Health and Safety and Facilities Management Units met with staff to review the actions which have been and will be taken. We will continue to thoroughly follow up on each complaint in a timely manner.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me, or your staff may call Margo Morales, Administrative Deputy, at (213) 738-2891.

MJS:RK:MM:SM

c: Robin Kay, Ph.D., Chief Deputy Director  
Margo Morales, Administrative Deputy  
Susan Moser, Departmental Human Resources Manager III